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Subject: Role of Editor Fritz Molden in
Publication of Gruber Memoirs

Report No: EAV-1090*

Date of Information: 10 November 1953

Place Acquired: Austria, Vienna

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Date of Report: 13 November 1953

Source: Well-placed in Austrian journalist circles.

The following explanation of why the controversial memoirs of Austrian Foreign Minister Karl Gruber were carried in summary form in the Viennese daily Die Presse was made privately by the editor and publisher of Die Presse, Fritz Molden, on 10 November 1953:

1. In March 1953, Gruber told Molden that he planned to write memoirs of his period as Foreign Minister and asked whether Molden cared to publish selections from the manuscript in advance of the publication of the book. Molden agreed. At that time Gruber anticipated that he would no longer be Foreign Minister when the book was finally published or, if he were still in office, that he would need the support which the publication of his memoirs could presumably lend.

2. At that time, Gruber's intention in publishing his memoirs was to strengthen his own political position and to present a strong argument for the foreign policies which he thought best for Austria.

3. The one general discussion in March was the only one which Molden had with Gruber on the subject of the memoirs. Between March and sometime in September, Gruber wrote the memoirs. Judging from the quality of the prose, Molden believes that Gruber wrote them himself.

4. On 30 October, the publishers Ullstein and Co. informed Molden that the book would be released in the near future and asked for a prompt decision as to whether Die Presse would publish advance selections. On that day, Molden received the manuscript from Ullstein. He turned it over to Milan Dubrovic and Otto Schulmeister, the principal editors of Die Presse, on 31 October: the decision to publish them was taken on that date.

5. Molden himself selected the material for the highly controversial installment of Gruber's memoirs which appeared in Die Presse on 3 November. He felt that the material should be published to counter the neutralist tendencies of the present Austrian government. He did expect that this chapter would cause some political excitement but was unprepared for the uproar which developed.

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Molden does not think that the articles in themselves are sufficiently important to merit the attention which they have received.

6. Molden claims that he assumed that Gruber, as a member of the Austrian cabinet, would clear the publication of the memoirs with Chancellor Julius Raab. After the excitement over the publication of the memoirs had begun, Molden discovered that Gruber had told Austrian writer Alexander Lernet-Holenia that he (Gruber) had forgotten to clear the matter with Raab.

7. An editorial which appeared in Die Presse on 8 November defending the publication of the Gruber memoirs was written almost entirely by Molden himself, although it was credited to Hans Maute. It was intended to answer the bitter attack on Molden which had appeared in the OeVP Neue Wiener Tageszeitung of 6 November and which, according to OeVP Secretary Alfred Maleta, was cleared with Raab. Molden also claims that, since the publication of the Gruber memoirs Raab has approached one of the stockholders of Die Presse and asked him not to support the paper.²

7 - 7 8. Molden is quite incensed at Salzburger Nachrichten editor Gustav Canaval, who carried an article on the Gruber memoirs in his paper on 8 November unfavorable to Molden. Molden states that Canaval has wanted to publish a newspaper in Vienna for a long time and that he finally came to an understanding with Raab on this matter in late October 1953. Molden attributes Canaval's attack to this understanding.

9. Molden believes that the net result of the publication of the Gruber memoirs will be favorable to Austria in the field of foreign affairs. He states that the dismissal of Gruber probably would have occurred before long in any case and maintains that the memoirs have focussed public attention on the issue of neutralism. According to Molden, Raab made several statements affirming a non-neutralist policy in a speech at Kufers, Lower Austria, on 8 November. Molden attributes this to Raab's awareness that neutralism has become a significant issue.

10. Molden regards himself as a member of the younger intellectuals group within the OeVP, a group which he maintains has been excluded from participation in the determination of OeVP and Austrian policy by the ruling clique of Party leaders. Molden identifies Gruber with this group but stresses that the group can lend Gruber no more than moral support. Molden states that he does not intend to start an active political career for himself for the next five years.

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¹Field Comment. The first announcement of the Gruber memoirs appeared in the morning edition of Die Presse for 31 October, which carried a red heading at the top of page one announcing that the memoirs would begin the following day.

²Source Comment. Molden clashed with Raab on another newspaper issue within the last year. At that time, Molden's plan for reviving the Vienna tabloid Kronenzeitung had to be dropped when Raab allegedly took a negative view of the project and made it known to Molden's prospective sources of credit.

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